

THIRTY-EIGHTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MINISTRY-AT-LARGE,

IN LOWELL, MASS.,

FOR THE YEAR 1882.

Read Feb. 25, 1883.

LOWELL, MASS.
MORNING MAIL PRINT: NO. 18 JACKSON STREET.
1883.



THIRTY-EIGHTH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MINISTRY-A-T-LARGE,

IN LOWELL, MASS.,

FOR THE YEAR 1882.

Read Feb. 25, 1883.

LOWELL, MASS.
MORNING MAIL PRINT: NO. 18 JACKSON STREET.
1883.

Board of Managers of the Ministry-at-Large in Lowell.

E. B. PATCH, PRESIDENT.

H. BURRAGE, SECRETARY.

D. B. BARTLETT, TREASURER.

G. F. RICHARDSON.

G. A. GERRY.

H. B. COBURN.

REV. J. L. SEWARD.

J. G. HILL.

JAMES FRANCIS.

J. TYLER STEVENS.

MISS GERTRUDE SHELDON, COLLECTOR.

REV. H. C. DUGANNE, MINISTER-AT-LARGE.

Officers and Teachers of the Sunday School.

OFFICERS:

MRS. H. C. DUGANNE, Superintendent.

JAMES BODEN, Assistant Librarian.

MRS. DORA HUNT, Secretary.

MRS. DORA HUNT, Organist.

ARTHUR CROWFOOT, Librarian.

C. P. HUTCHINSON, Chorister.

TEACHERS:

Miss Annie F. Anderson.

Miss E. O. Robbins.

Miss Clara Bonney.

Mrs. George F. Richardson.

Mrs. Nellie M. Arthur.

Andrew Watson.

Miss Kate Brazer.

Miss Alice Eastman.

J. D. Hubbard.

Miss Sophia L. Raymond.

Mrs. D. S. Richardson.

Mrs. Henry Young.

Mrs. D. B. Bartlett.

Rev. H. C. Duganne.

Miss Mabel Vose.

Miss Ellen W. Ayer.

Miss Belle Coburn.

Mogan

HN

62

168

1882

0005428936

REPORT.

BUSINESS PROSPERITY.

The year that has just closed has been one of unusual business activity and prosperity, especially in our city. The mills and factories have all been in full operation, the shops have resounded with activity, and building has been pushed forward in all directions with energy and zeal. New mills and shops have been built and old ones enlarged and improved, and money has circulated with a freedom not experienced for many years, if the weekly clearances may be regarded as a true index. Deposits have been drawn from the savings banks in larger sums, put into material and labor, and have found their way back again through the laborer and mechanic in numerous smaller sums to a greater extent than for some years, at least, there being over one thousand more deposits in this city in 1882 than in 1881, and \$138,000 more money deposited, mainly by the laboring classes, indicating a handsome cash balance in favor of labor, over the high cost of living.

STATISTICS OF THE YEAR.

With such a healthy state of business prosperity, the number of applicants for charitable relief should be reduced to its lowest limits; and I have no doubt that such is the case. Probably with our population, no

matter how great the business prosperity of the city, we shall never find much less destitution than has been experienced the last year. Our records show only 1778 applications in 1882, against 2057 in 1881, and 3542 in 1876, when the pressure of hard times lay upon us. And this decrease in the number of applications is made with a rapidly increasing population. The number of families represented in these applications is 371, of which 94 were refused, and 277 received assistance. In respect to nationality, they stand :

American	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	131
Irish	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	126
English	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	55
French	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	25
Scotch	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	22
British Provinces and Others	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	12

In respect to condition, there were :

Married	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	179
Widows	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	86
Widowers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	9
Deserted wives and husbands	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	44
Single	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	53

We have expended in relief \$2472.15—\$1384.53* from the income of the Nesmith Charity Fund, \$588.86 from the Tyler Fund and \$498.76 from the funds of the Ministry-at-Large, including "special" contributions and the Dalton Fund. This is an average of \$6.66 to an applicant, or \$8.92 to a family actually relieved,—an amount of relief by no means extravagant, and yet very

*The amount expended from the Nesmith Fund, it will be seen, is less than the annual income by about \$116; but last year we expended \$400 more than the income.

often of great importance, small as it is, to those receiving it. Besides this, 1108 garments have been supplied, —new and second-hand.

The Sunday School has maintained its numbers, registering 289 scholars and 17 teachers; but it has suffered somewhat in its average attendance, owing to the interruption during the repairs on the Chapel. The Sewing School, which was discontinued during the building, has been resumed, and is in good condition, numbering 88 little girls, some of whom are becoming quite dexterous with the needle. Excellent facilities are now afforded for the Cooking Class, but this much needed branch of industrial education has not yet been resumed, for want of the necessary funds to secure the right instructor. It is to be hoped that by another year this may receive the necessary means to become an established branch of our work, for the truest and best charity is that which wisely supplies the means and facilities for self-help.

OUT-DOOR RELIEF.

MUNICIPAL.

Two years ago, in my annual report, I called attention to the dangers and bad results of a too liberal and an indiscriminate out-door relief, and showed, as it seems to me, from the best authority and from a wide range of statistics, that pauperism has ever kept pace with the free distribution of alms,—that it springs up luxuriant and rank like weeds from a rich soil, wherever charity overflows its legitimate channels. So rapid and so enormous has been the growth of pauperism in this country under the stimulus of pensions, State aid and large appropriations for the poor,— more corrupt often,

and a thousand times more demoralizing, than the much abused "River and Harbor Bill,"— that it has become a serious question with many leading philanthropists and social scientists whether all out-door municipal relief should not be totally abolished, leaving the care of the poor wholly to a system of organized voluntary charities. Its reduction from \$58,000 to \$7000 in Philadelphia, and its total abolition in Brooklyn, N. Y., were attended with such good results that the prevailing sentiment among the representatives of charity at the Congress of Charities and Correction which met in Boston, July, 1881, was unmistakably in its favor.

Yet we questioned there, and question still, the moral right of any state or municipality to abandon any of its subjects or members to the uncertain chances of voluntary relief. Nor does it seem to me just to require or expect the generous and self-sacrificing among us to assume responsibilities and burdens which should be borne equally by all. The legislator who votes to lend the sanction of the state to the making of paupers, has certainly no right to ask me to bear his share of the burden he has created, simply because he knows I will do it, for humanity's sake, when he refuses.

VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

Besides, all the dangers and evils of out-door relief are not on the side of municipal relief. It is a question in my mind whether or not the multiplicity of sources of voluntary relief in our large cities, intersecting and overlapping each other in all directions as they do, together with individual almsgiving from the desk and kitchen, without coöperative checks and investigation, is not the source of more real mischief than that which comes from the too liberal hand of the state. The cut-

ting off of the latter would naturally tend to multiply the former, as humanity refuses to look upon suffering without an effort to relieve it, whether wisely or unwisely. And this is a danger to be avoided. We have already too many charities, too many independent sources of relief in our larger cities, and if I would not be misunderstood I should say, what duty impels me to utter, that we in Lowell cannot do a more unwise thing than to multiply the sources of our out-door relief without that full, free and complete coöperation between them which our Associated Charities proposes, but has not had. I say it from no personal motives or interest whatever, but because I believe it to be true, there should be but one agency of relief covering the same class or field in the same city, however large, — one agency, if need be, with many branches. Competition in business is good, but competition in charity is vicious. Yet there is such a thing where rival societies exist. Each one desires to make the best possible showing; and to this end both sentiment and figures are introduced which would hardly stand the test of a too close scrutiny. Many a touching story or pathetic appeal could be utterly spoiled by a single word dropped in at the close by some one who knows the other side. I have seen a child held up before a crowded audience as a sample of the excellent work done in that institution, into which institution no child of that age, by its own rules, could be admitted. And were I to tell you that I have it on good authority that children have been borrowed on public days to make a good showing, and returned to their homes after the exhibition,* you would be surprised that such things could be done in the name of charity. And yet such are the temptations arising from

*It is just to say that this did not occur in Lowell.

rivalry in charity. And as the number of cases aided helps the showing in the annual statement, it makes it easy for the designing and practised beggar to go the rounds of these rival agencies and find a too ready acceptance.

I look upon the multiplication of relief agencies, therefore, in the same town or city, applying to the same class of the needy, as a serious mistake, however well-meant, unless they are closely connected by a system of organized charities. There may be exceptions, but this is the rule. Where charities abound, there mendicancy much more abounds. And those churches which undertake the distribution of alms, beyond the narrow and confidential circle of their own actual membership, without coöperation,—and I think I may say even with it,—will find in the end that they have added nothing to the strength and purity of their societies and rendered little service to the public. Better, far, to take good care of the tried and true members, privately and confidentially, and remand all others to the established agencies of charity, to which all should contribute. I am aware of the liability of the charge of prejudice and motives of self-interest. But I disavow both. I make these statements simply as the result of experience and observation and as a student of social science, feeling confident that, if I have spoken too soon, the time is not far off when the truth of my assertion will be recognized and acknowledged. Religion should overflow with charity, but should never be accepted in exchange for charity. Ever since the days of Simon Magus till now there have been plenty of men ready to barter religion for gain, if it be but for a loaf of bread or a second-hand garment. And the knowledge of this fact keeps the worthy poor, who would scorn to trade in religion, away from those places

of worship where relief is given, lest they be suspected of concealing the same motives. This has been painfully illustrated in our own experience and efforts. We are so plain and outspoken in this matter that those actuated by sordid motives are soon weeded out; and those who are sincere, and remain, find it requires all the moral courage they possess to withstand the prejudice they encounter at our church door.

INDIVIDUAL ALMSGIVING.

But the only danger of the evil effects of out-door relief does not arise from institutions of charity and agencies of relief. Private, individual almsgiving plays a very large part in the production of the pauper element, which has grown to such proportions in this country in these last twenty years. There is more indiscriminate giving at the doors and on the streets in our city than is generally supposed. Our Associated Charities has brought this fact surprisingly to light this last year. It is always easier to give, when we have it to give, than it is to refuse. Our time is often more valuable than the trifle we contribute, and so we give to get rid of the suppliant. And then there is a real satisfaction in feeling that we have done something to relieve want. A recent writer in "The Queen" has expressed this sentiment so well in an article on "The Vice of Promiscuous Charity," that I quote at length. "To relieve a really necessitous person," says our author, "is an action which gratifies certain moral instincts which are inherent in every human being; it gives a sense of personal satisfaction; there is a feeling in the heart of the donor that a good deed has been done, and a satisfactory self-complacency pervades the mind at having performed it. When such a desirable mental state can be procured

at any time by the expenditure of a bronze coin, or indulged in *in excelsis* for a sixpence, it is not surprising that people whose moral sentiments are stronger than their intellectual powers should pursue this pleasant mental recreation — the evil they do is altogether beyond their knowledge ; they gratify their own feelings with the idea that they have relieved distress, and indulge in much smug self-sufficiency in congratulating themselves on the good they have done.” “These promiscuous alms-givers,” the writer continues, “would not hesitate to denounce the drunkard, who to gratify his desires beggars himself and starves his family, nor the idler who prefers indolence and poverty to industry and competence. But they do not refrain from doing evil for the gratification of their own feelings, and this under the false pretence that they are doing good.” This is strong language, but there is much truth in it. We should, however, make this distinction : the drunkard knows he is doing evil, while the alms-giver believes he is doing good. Our fault is, in not employing the means at our command, to inform ourselves that it is an evil. It was said, as an objection to the Associated Charities, that the right of private giving was a privilege we should not surrender. The Associated Charities does not ask us to surrender any such privilege. But it does ask us to avail ourselves of such facilities as it furnishes to enable us to give so that our giving shall not foster an evil among us. And they have an undoubted right to demand of us, in the name of the common weal, that we should give intelligently or refrain from giving. The author already quoted says on this point : “All persons who have taken the trouble to make the slightest inquiry into the subject know that the necessitous poor never beg ; that the whole of the beggars of the metropolis and

the tramps of the country districts belong to a distinct class,—in great part an hereditary caste,—which is supported by the maudlin sentimentality of those who encourage this vicious mode of life. By so doing they tend to perpetuate one of the most serious of social evils which afflict the nation. They foster and encourage the idle and dissolute class of vagrants who infest the country and disseminate vice, disease, and moral as well as physical degradation amongst the population.” “If persons wish to gratify their charitable feelings” (and we should be sorry if they did not), “and they are really desirous of doing good and not evil, let them seek out the deserving poor; there is no lack of them to be found when sought. Or should they be too much occupied with town life, and live too remote from the dwellings of the humbler classes, they can give their alms to the poor-boxes of the police magistrates” (this is in England) “in full confidence that they will be bestowed only on the most worthy objects. But let them abstain from pleasing themselves by giving money to sturdy beggars in the streets, which demoralizing practice is none the less injurious from being performed with the idea of doing good.”

The evil here complained of is probably much greater in the old country than in this, yet the principle is the same everywhere. Promiscuous giving, whether of money or clothes or food, results in the extension of pauperism. On calling at a house to investigate a case, some time since, I recognized a tramp in the room. When he had left, I asked for an explanation. The woman said he had been permitted to sleep there upon the floor for some time, but his board was obtained elsewhere. When asked where he was employed, she replied “that he did not work; that he said there was no need

in it, in his case ; that he could get his living any time for six months without a stroke of labor." He was fed and clothed by those who give at their doors and on the streets. A reporter on one of our dailies was accosted by a tramp on his way, he said, from Rhode Island to Manchester, N. H., where his parents lived, and he wanted a trifle to help him on his way. Our friend of the pencil gave it, and followed his beneficiary to a drinking saloon near by. The next day he saw him pursuing the same calling, still on his way to New Hampshire. This time he helped him on his way to "Little Canada," where he belonged, not New Hampshire, speedily by the application of sole leather. And I am not sure but the latter contribution was more profitable, if not even more Christian, than the former ! Houses indicative of wealth are "spotted," and made the particular object of attack. We asked a little girl the other day why she went out to beg. She said her father sent her. Then we asked why she went to this particular house where I knew she had been. She said she saw it was a *large* house, and she thought she might get something there. And this thing goes on to an extent we little imagine. The Associated Charities is familiar with the history of the Richards-Nutting-Horsely children who through its efforts have finally been rescued from the streets, the "Widgeon" woman of "wooden-leg" notoriety, the "wooden-legged" man, the "Mary Ann Anderson-Henderson" of the "No. 37" fame, and many others of like profession, who have made their calling more remunerative than honest labor. It is ninety-nine points against the applicant that he seeks out these houses and localities. The really worthy poor go direct to the established agencies of charity, or to some kindly neighbor or friend, if they are forced to ask aid, and

make their wants known in a delicate, yet frank and open way. There is no boldness about it, and yet no unnecessary concealment. Poverty is no crime when it is not the result of crime, and there is no occasion to be ashamed of it. There are poor whom we meet who are a benediction in their poverty. Such persons are careful not to advertise their poverty unnecessarily, nor to pretend to be what they are not. Honest, straightforward and good, they win us to their side and hold us there by the genuineness of their character. Such poor there are who need the helping hand, but they are not found going from house to house or sending their children out to beg.

EVILS OF LONG CONTINUED AID.

Nor is it only the unworthy mendicants that are confirmed in their poverty by a continued giving. Perhaps no one, however good and pure, is wholly proof against the demoralizing effects of charity if it be long continued. At first it comes hard to ask aid, but soon it becomes easier, and then comes a moral weakening, a slacking of effort, and at last an unconscious dependence. The exceptions to this are rare. The majority, though worthy, take to relief as boys take to tobacco, first loathing it, then loving it. A valuable testimony to this tendency was given us a few months since. A lady of culture and refinement called on us for relief, soon after we took charge of this ministry. She had been reduced, with her family, to abject poverty by the intemperance of her husband. Aid was given her, and her husband was induced to reform. But his business was destroyed, and debts hung over him like the nightmare. It was, therefore, sometime before he got fully upon his feet again and beyond the need of help. But he arose by

and by and became established once more in business in another city, where his wife became herself an almoner, having charge of one of the wards. On a visit to Lowell last autumn, and to the Chapel, for which she always has a benediction, she remarked upon this wonderful tendency, which she had observed, of becoming dependent in the receipt of aid. And then, pausing a moment, she added: "And do you know that *we* were falling into that same condition when we were in Lowell? We should have soon become pauperized if help had been continued." Fortunately in his case it had been given at the right time, and withdrawn before it had gone too far. It is a wise provision of the Nesmith Fund that its aid is but temporary.

All out-door relief, therefore, if not strictly limited and closely guarded, whether municipal or voluntary, corporate or individual, is liable to become productive of the evil it seeks to cure. And the abolition of one, while the others remain, would not remove the difficulty. And yet it is plain that a certain amount of out-door relief must be given. It cannot be avoided. There are accidents, sickness, failure of employment, and other imperious causes, which render temporary assistance necessary. And then there are those, needing aid, of a high moral character and of a refined, sensitive nature, whom it would be cruel in the extreme to "pack off" to the almshouse.

Such persons must be cared for outside of the almshouse; and the question recurs, By *whom* and *how* shall it be done? Shall it be done by the city or town? or shall it be done by voluntary agencies, like the Young Men's Christian Association, the Ministry-at-Large, and kindred organizations? or shall it be left to private and individual benevolence? We should answer to this: that

it should be done by all three of these agencies, but not independently. They should all combine and coöperate, that one may not undo what the other seeks to do.

THE RELATION OF MUNICIPAL TO VOLUNTARY CHARITIES.

There are three classes of the poor that call for out-door relief. First, the worthy temporarily needy; second, the worthy permanently needy; and third, the unworthy temporarily needy. It is the duty of the city or town, or the state through the city or town, to stand ready to respond to any call that may be justly made upon it. It has no right to assume that any voluntary relief shall be given. It stands in relation to its subjects or members, in the position of a parent to his children. No father has a right to assume that the neighbors will take care of his child if he abandons it, although he is morally certain that they will do so. Such an assumption is manifestly unjust. So far as its duty is concerned, the state should not suppose the existence of a single benevolent impulse in the community, but should provide judiciously for the proper relief of all who may need it, within its jurisdiction.

But, as the great majority who seek relief through the overseers of the poor have become destitute through their idle and vicious habits, there is a certain amount of obloquy and disgrace which attaches to this form of aid. It therefore becomes extremely humiliating and distressing to a high-minded, sensitive person, whose poverty is the result of accident and not of folly or dissipation, to seek relief in common with this degraded and disreputable class, and thus *seem* to become allied to them.

Here, then, voluntary charity should come in and revive the city of so much of its responsibility. The really worthy temporarily needy and the eminently good permanently needy should never be forced to call on the city or town authorities for aid, but should be relieved by the hand of *real* charity, which carries with it the love and good-will of the benefactor. It was to meet the wants of this class of the temporarily needy that this Ministry-at-Large was formed, and for this purpose still exists, and if supplied with sufficient funds, in coöperation with the churches and other agencies, through the aid of the Associated Charities, it will undertake to see that no family suffers within the city, whose disability is not permanent. The worthy permanently destitute must be cared for among us by voluntary and special contributions, as we have no institutions or agencies which include them, except widows or single ladies over sixty years of age, who are received at the Old Ladies' Home.

These provided for, it remains for the city to take care of the *unworthy* poor, (for there are unworthy poor who must have temporary relief), the poor who have brought their poverty on themselves by their prodigality and dissipation ; and they form a very large class of those seeking relief. Yet they must not be left to starve, and it is not always convenient or politic to remove them at once to the almshouse.

OUT-DOOR RELIEF SHOULD BE TEMPORARY.

Then *how* shall this help be given ? We would reply, *Temporarily* in all cases, except for the very few *especially* deserving, whose disability may be of a permanent character. Let the disbursement of municipal relief be strictly guarded and limited by the most rigid

rules and regulations,—especially where politics enters at all into its transactions, as it is maintained by those who advocate its abolition that it is especially, on this account, liable to corruption and abuse. Out-door relief should always be limited as to quantity and duration,—especially the latter,—except in the few cases already mentioned. More harm arises from the “dole system,”—from continued giving,—than from any other form of charity. The rule adopted by the trustees of the Nesmith charity would be a good one for the city authorities to establish, namely, not to aid any one family more than three consecutive years without a special permit from the Board. This would spoil the nice little calculation of those—by far too many—who waste their earnings in summer with “intent aforethought” of being carried through the winter by the “city team.” Were such a rule adopted, a few might feel the pinch for a little while, but not long. It is the testimony of those acquainted with the facts, that in the city of Brooklyn, where municipal relief was struck off in one blow, from \$141,000 in 1877, to nothing in 1878, that no unusual suffering followed; and from a statement of Hon. Seth Low, mayor of that city, we learn that “since that time the number of inmates in the almshouses and hospitals has steadily decreased, and the number of applications to private charity societies has also decreased more than one-third.”

This same principle applies also to the Ministry-at-Large and other societies and agencies of out-door relief; and also to private almsgiving.

Two things are to be guarded against—pauperization by continued giving, and pauperization by promiscuous giving. And these can be accomplished best now through the agency and coöperation afforded by the Associated

Charities. The Ministry-at-Large has availed itself of the advantages of this organization. But its benefits have been greatly restricted by the lack of coöperation on the part of the city, and of others, both societies and individuals. To afford the necessary checks and balances in out-door relief, and to render the work most useful and helpful, with the least possible harm, all giving relief should register, whether private or public, municipal or voluntary, and coöperate in checking pauperism, and carrying sunshine and real benedictions to the poor. The Ministry-at-Large has given its coöperation in good faith, and it surely has more to surrender than all others, perhaps except the city. It is wholly unsectarian in its character, purely benevolent in its office, and so private in its record that even its president has not seen the face of one of its cards for a twelve-month. It is only where the case is duplicated, or has become public property by becoming a common beggar, that it is discussed openly. There can be, therefore, no good reason why all giving aid should not register. The money saved by it, private and public, in one month, I have no doubt, would pay the registrar's salary for a whole year; and the moral advantages it would be difficult to estimate. Though our connection with this organization has doubled our office work, we have received valuable aid through its excellent corps of visitors, whom, indeed, it cost us about as much to watch at first as it did the poor themselves, but who soon learned their work and did it well, carrying sunshine and good cheer to the desolate homes they were called to visit.

And in conclusion, the Ministry-at-Large would extend its hearty thanks to those excellent visitors and all others who have contributed to the efficiency and success

of our work; and may wisdom and true benevolence possess all our hearts, and the love of God guide and direct us in all our efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

H. C. DUGANNE,

Minister-at-Large in Lowell.





